

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814

September 5, 2002

The Honorable Dede Alpert
Chair, Joint Committee to Develop A Master Plan for Education
1020 N Street, Suite 560
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Alpert:

We have been honored to serve as members of the Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education – Kindergarten through University. You are to be commended for the very conscientious effort you have made toward crafting the California Master Plan for Education, Kindergarten through University. We would also like to thank the members of the working groups for their time and expertise and the public for their input throughout the process. While you and the other members of the Joint Committee have demonstrated a commitment to putting forth a document which can be effectively utilized on a statewide basis, there are several components in the Master Plan Report which we believe may be inconsistent with this goal.

We are concerned by the extensive array of recommendations in the Master Plan Report. The original Master Plan has enjoyed decades of success because it established a clear governance structure that defined the mission and roles of post-secondary segments without being overly prescriptive. While the Joint Committee should be commended for approaching such a daunting task as to coordinate K-16 education in California, we are concerned that the report is less of a blueprint and more a series of specific policy points. We will attempt to specifically address areas of concern.

The Accountability section of the Report seems to move away from the state's more recent and deliberate attention to "outcomes" and performance measures and instead returns to the prevailing focus in previous decades on "inputs," i.e. money, personnel resources, program expansion, etc. As an example, the document seems to favor testing as an approach to support teaching practices more so than testing for accountability, by determining if the students have actually learned and the teachers have effectively taught.